



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

Manual:	CP&P	Child Protection and Permanency	Effective Date:
Volume:	II	Intake, Investigation and Response	3-13-2006
Chapter:	C	Initial Response	Revised Date:
Subchapter:	5	Investigation	2-01-2021
Issuance:	125	Response Criteria	

Purpose

This issuance establishes policies and procedures relating to the response criteria for initial response.

Authority

- N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.29 and 9:6-8.30.

A. Time Frames for Initial Response

See [CP&P-II-C-2-300](#), Timeframes for Initial Response on open cases.

Note: “An open case” is defined as a family or child assigned to a Local Office Worker from SCR or other means (e.g., courts, interstate etc.) to determine risk, safety, or service needs. After the initial investigation or assessment, a determination is made to keep the case open for permanency services or terminate involvement.” In addition, Intake cases are to be seen at least every 30 days and Permanency cases are seen at least monthly.

B. Good Faith Effort

1. Make contact or "good faith effort" to see child -- The Child Protective Investigator is required to make in-person contact with each child victim within the assigned response time, to assure the child is safe. If unable to make contact when conducting a CPS investigation, the assigned child protective

Investigator is required to make a good faith effort to establish contact as follows:

2. Make a minimum of three (3) attempts to contact the child in person within the assigned response time frame requirement. Wait at least one hour between subsequent attempts, unless there are clear indications that the family will "return home" before then. Consult your Supervisor after initiating two (2) attempts. If a clear indication is found that the family does not reside at the address provided - the address is an abandoned property, it is learned that the family is on vacation, etc. - apprise your Supervisor of the situation immediately. Confirm that no additional attempts are necessary that day.
3. If the report indicates a "current" location for the child, as well as a home address, attempt to contact the child at each location.

C. Child Protective Investigator

1. If unable to make contact after two (2) attempts, the Worker immediately consult his or her Supervisor -- Do not wait until the end of the workday to notify your Supervisor.
2. The Supervisor shall determine whether a third attempt - or additional subsequent attempts - should be made, and when and how the attempt(s) is to be made. You and your Supervisor discuss best practice options for continued efforts to see the child. Documentation - Document all contacts, or attempts to make contact, with the child/family in a Contact Activity Note in NJ SPIRIT (NJS), through the Investigation Window, Contact Tab. When the Initial Face-to-Face contact is made with case participants at different dates, document each initial face-to-face contact on a separate Contact Activity **Note:** enter the applicable date.
3. Document good faith effort in NJS. When a minimum of three (3) attempts to make face-to-face contact with the child/family results in no contact, document the good faith effort in the narrative section of the Contact Activity Note, with Result being "Good Faith Effort-Not All Children Seen." Documentation includes the date and time of each attempt to see a child. Contact Activity Notes are subject to supervisory approval.

Note: See "Documenting Initial Contacts and Good Faith Effort during a CPS Investigation," in the NJS Cheat Sheets, on the NJS Desktop.

D. Further Considerations

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION REQUIRED
Supervisor and Child Protective Investigator	<p>Identify additional efforts in an attempt to locate a child victim or client family at intake, including:</p> <p>Contact the reporter or an identified collateral source for additional or clarifying information, verification of an address/the child's immediate whereabouts, directions to/a description of the home, etc.</p> <p>Consider whether the local police or the office's Human Services Police Officer could assist with confirming a given street address, accompanying the child protective Investigator into the field, etc.</p> <p>If the case was recently closed, contact the former Worker or Supervisor for possible leads.</p> <p>Consult NJS (for former addresses of the family, member location information, etc.). Consult other computer screens for possible leads.</p> <p>Determine, together, whether to call the family home, if a telephone number is available (thus giving up the possibility of an unannounced first visit to the home).</p>

	<p>Determine whether the child protective Investigator should contact neighbors in attempting to locate the child and/or family.</p> <p>If the report is received on a Friday, determine what steps to take to continue efforts to make contact during the upcoming weekend. Consult the Casework Supervisor to determine whether follow-up efforts by SPRU throughout the weekend would be appropriate.</p> <p>Make additional attempts to contact the child/family at different times of the day, including attempts in the morning, afternoon, evening, and night.</p>
Child Protective Investigator	<p>Document all your unsuccessful attempts in Contact Activity Notes.</p> <p>Keep your Supervisor abreast of your continued attempts to make contact.</p>

E. Follow-Up, Until Resolution

1. Child Protective Investigator shall continue to make attempts on a daily basis -- If unable to make contact with the child victim/family on the day the report was assigned, continue efforts on a daily basis, at a minimum. The Worker shall attempt to see the child/family at different times of the day, including morning, afternoon, evening, night. Attempt contacts at locations child/family may be most likely to frequent, such as:
 - Schools, day care centers
 - Community centers, Y's

- Community shelters
 - Houses of worship
 - Neighbors
2. Seek help from Human Services Police -- Seek help from the Human Services Police (HSP) within 72 hours of initiating good faith efforts to see the child. See [CP&P-II-C-4-300](#), Human Services Police. Assistance from HSP could include, but is not limited to:
- Accompaniment into the field.
 - Assist with address verification and/or search efforts.
 - Check for outstanding warrants on the parent(s)/caregiver.
 - Transportation of youth, when necessary, for added security.
 - Removing children from the home due to protective service concerns during an investigation.
 - Assistance in gaining entry to apartment buildings or other structures.

Example: You have repeatedly attempted to gain entry into a housing project. The Human Services Police might provide assistance in getting inside the building, thus enabling you to knock on the identified apartment unit door.

3. Invoke Missing Persons Protocol -- If unable to locate a child/family within five (5) calendar days of receipt of the report, after taking the above measures, including obtaining help and guidance from the Human Services Police, invoke the "missing persons protocol," as explained at [CP&P-III-C-4-100](#), Locating a Missing Child/Family.

F. Good Cause to Extend Investigations Beyond 60 Calendar Days

1. Within 60 calendar days -- Policy requires that the child protection investigation be concluded within 60 calendar days of receipt of the allegation at the NJ State Central Registry and assignment of the intake to the Local Office for response. Within those 60 calendar days, the Child Protective Investigator shall :

- Conduct and conclude the investigation;
- Make a definitive investigation finding determination; and
- Complete and process required "paperwork," including on-line case recording in NJS, the system of record.

Establish "good cause" if beyond 60 calendar days -- Good cause shall be established, if an investigation cannot be concluded within 60 calendar days. Good cause extensions, if granted, are in 30 calendar day increments; specific time frames may be established for shorter time frames, when appropriate. Seek an extension before the 60 days are up, to apprise your Supervisor of your difficulties in concluding the investigation.

2. Acceptable reasons for extensions are limited, and require justification by the child protective Investigator and approval by the Supervisor and the Casework Supervisor.
3. With Casework Supervisor approval, an extension may be granted in 30 calendar day increments. Acceptable reasons for requesting an extension include:
 - CP&P needs information from the County Prosecutor, a law enforcement authority, or the court. Extensions may also be granted at the request of one of these entities.
 - Crucial collateral information or a written report is needed (including such things as a diagnosis, a written evaluation or professional opinion, a medical/doctor's report).
 - Information is needed from the Medical Examiner (autopsy report).
4. Other reason. Use "other" only in extreme or unusual circumstances. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Additional interview or contacts are required because a family or household member, the alleged perpetrator, or the parent's paramour could not be interviewed or re-interviewed for one of the reasons below:
 - The person's or the family's address is unknown; a search is being conducted in accordance with policy;
 - The person is out of town or out of state, and cannot be contacted;
 - The address given for the person or the family is incorrect or the person/family no longer resides there; a search is being conducted in accordance with policy.
5. Case Plan required -- For each investigation that extends beyond 60 days, the Investigator is required to complete a Case Plan Assessment, CP&P [Form 26-81](#), to justify continued investigation efforts for a prolonged period of time.
 6. If a second extension becomes necessary, which would take the investigation beyond 90 days, the approval of the Local Office Manager or designee is also required.

Procedures

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION REQUIRED
Child Protective Investigator	<p>Complete a detailed written justification when requesting an extension.</p> <p>Complete a Case Plan for investigations extending beyond 60 days.</p>
Supervisor	<p>Approve or deny the request for an extension.</p> <p>Enter a justification why you granted or denied the extension in a Contact Activity Note.</p>
Casework Supervisor	<p>Approve or deny the extension.</p> <p>Enter a justification why you granted or denied the extension in a Contact Activity Note.</p>

LOM or Designee	<p>Approve or deny the extension.</p> <p>(Local Office Manager/designee approval is required, if a second extension is sought, which would take the investigation beyond 90 days.)</p>
-----------------	--

Definition:

- **Open Case** –“An open case is defined as a family or child assigned to a Local Office Worker from SCR or other means (e.g., courts, interstate etc.) to determine risk, safety, or service needs. After the initial investigation or assessment, a determination is made to keep the case open for permanency services or terminate involvement.” In addition, Intake cases are to be seen every 30 days and Permanency cases are seen monthly.

Policy History:

- 5-28-2013
- 1-28-2013
- 1-14-2008
- 3-13-2006